

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West



Mormon Island Artifacts – Photo Credit: Winetta Owens

Mormon Island was once a mining community, which was settled by Mormon immigrants, seeking fortune along the American River. Early in March 1848, W. Sidney, S. Willis, and Wilford Hudson, members of the Mormon Battalion, set out from Sutter's Fort to hunt deer. Stopping on the south fork of the American River, they found gold. They told their story upon returning to the fort, and soon about 150 Mormons and other miners flocked to the site, which was named Mormon Island. This was the first major gold strike in California after James W. Marshall's discovery at Coloma. The population of the town in 1853 was more than 2,500. It had four hotels, three dry-goods stores, five general merchandise stores, an express office, and many small shops. A fire destroyed much of the town in 1856, and it was never rebuilt. The community dwindled after the California gold rush, and only a few families were left in the 1940s.

In January 2014, remnants and artifacts of the town became exposed during extremely low water levels at Browns Ravine. Sightseers and historians visiting Mormon Island are fascinated by the foundations and artifacts discovered in the area which include buildings, rusty nails, pottery, bricks and pipes. Visitors are encouraged to view the artifacts, but respect the items in the historical site by not removing them from the area. Metal detectors are not allowed at Folsom Reservoir.

For more information on Mormon Island Artifacts, please visit:

<http://www.usbr.gov/newsroom/newsrelease/detail.cfm?RecordID=45726>

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